

John Carson House (Stagecoach Inn)
Main Street
Fairfield
Utah County
Utah

HABS No. U-31

HABS
UTAH
25-FAIRF
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
UTAH
25-FAIRF
2-

JOHN CARSON HOUSE (STAGECOACH INN)

Location: Main Street, Fairfield, Utah County, Utah.
Geographic Location Code: 43- -049
Latitude: 40° 15' 40" N Longitude: 112° 5' 34" W

Present Owner: State of Utah.

Present Occupant: Utah State Park & Recreation Commission.

Present Use: Museum

Statement of Significance: Stagecoach Inn in Fairfield, adjacent to Camp Floyd, Encampment of Col. Albert S. Johnson's Army, sent out to Utah in 1858 to investigate the conduct of the Mormons.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

John Carson
Carson Family (Descendants)
Warren Carson
State of Utah

2. Date of erection: Ca. 1858

3. Architect: Unknown

4. Builder: John Carson built the inn which was originally a large family residence for the Carson family. It had 14 rooms, seven of them bedrooms.

5. Alterations: The inn was restored in 1963 by Architect-Burtch Beall.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

In 1855, John Carson, a Pennsylvanian by birth, settled in Cedar Valley together with his four brothers and two other men. To protect themselves and their families from indian depredations, they built a stone fort, four rods by four rods square, within which were log and adobe living quarters. The north wall of the fort was located about where the south wall of the inn now stands.

Although two of the Carson brothers were killed by Indians, the settlement was a success and formed a nucleus for further settlement.

In 1858, the United States Army of the Department of Utah under the command of Colonel Albert Sydney Johnson, consisting of some 3500 or more army personnel, 586 horses, 3000 mules and 500 wagons arrived in Cedar Valley after marching through Salt Lake City. They were sent by President Buchanan to investigate reports about the Mormon conduct in Utah. They selected the little settlement of Fairfield as a permanent post because of the ample supply of water and wood, and built permanent barracks, stables, mess halls, officer's quarters and all the other structures required for an army post. They named it Camp Floyd after John Floyd of Virginia, the Secretary of War.

Overnight, Fairfield became a rip-roaring western army town, and with Camp Floyd, soon had a population of over 7000 people. (The population of Salt Lake City was only 15,000 at the time.) The old stone fort was taken down and in its place John Carson built a two-story adobe and frame hotel and inn. Mr. Carson was an elder in the Mormon church, and would permit no liquor to be served in his inn, or "round" dancing to take place in his dining room, since only square dancing was approved by his church. Thus it became an oasis of decency for prominent visitors and dignitaries, including many of the actors and actresses of the day enroute to performances in San Francisco. One room in the Carson House, as it was known, was named the Greeley Room after Louis Greeley, brother of Horace Greeley, who occupied it for a long time.

Camp Floyd was established before the Overland Stage and the Pony Express. Captain Simpson, Senior Engineering Officer at Camp Floyd laid out the Overland Stage Route from Salt Lake City by the shorter southern route. (It was thenceforth known as the Simpson Route). The first Overland State station out of Salt Lake City was the Carson House at Fairfield. It operated as such until the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads joined at Promontory, Utah in 1869. The Pony Express made the inn a station stop until October 23, 1861, when the telegraph arrived.

With Civil War storm clouds gathering, many of the troops were ordered away from Camp Floyd in 1860, including their commander, General Johnson. His successor, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke changed the post name to Fort Crittenden. However on May 17, 1861 he was ordered back to Fort Leavenworth with his command and on July 27, 1861 what remained of the Army of Utah left. The property was sold at auction, and the buildings were razed or burned. By September of 1861 only 18 families called Fairfield their home. All that was left of Camp Floyd was the cemetery, which remains today.

John Carson stayed on and raised his family at the inn. After his death, his widow and children continued to operate the hostelry until it became unprofitable. It finally closed in 1947. In 1959, John Carson's son, Warren Carson of Orem, Utah, turned the inn over to the Utah State Park and Recreation Commission for preservation as a museum. It has been restored and opened its doors to visitors in 1963. The inn, as restored, "has 14 rooms, seven of them bedrooms." "There's a hole in the wall from an 'accidental' shotgun blast. Some of the panes of glass are original. Fireplaces in each room have been restored, although they are no longer used for heat."

C. Sources of Information:

Camp Floyd State Park pamphlet, Utah State Park & Recreation Commission.

Deseret News & Telegram, March 6, 1963.

Our Pioneer Heritage, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, 1959.

Prepared by John L. Giusti, AIA
September 5, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: A very early Stagecoach Inn which figured in the history of the adjacent Camp Floyd Military Post.
2. Condition of fabric: Restored and maintained by Utah Park & Recreation Commission.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A 52'8" x 59'6", "L" plan, two stories high.
2. Foundations: The floor level is so low that the foundations are concealed.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, plastered, except for the two-story addition at the west which is frame with shiplap cove siding. Plaster is white. Siding is light gray and wood trim and doors are darker gray.
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls except for frame portion at west. Wood framed floors and roof.
5. Porches: There is a two-story gallery with wooden posts and railing across the south side, stopped at the west by the frame addition. The one-story wing has a porch along the east side.
6. Chimneys: Four, brick, plastered. Two in the two-story wing and two in the one-story wing.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Four panel doors.
 - b. Windows: Six-over-six, double hung.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gables with lean-tos at porches and along west side of the one-story wing. Wood shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Simple cornice returns at two-story gables.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. First floor: Behind the front gallery are two square rooms, each with a front door. The single story wing extends to the rear with two square rooms, each with a door to the east porch. Four small square rooms in a line adjoin the rear rooms and occupy the lean-to. The frame addition has a single large room on the west front which has no communication with the rest of the Inn.

- b. Second floor: Two square rooms in the masonry portion and one front bedroom and two rear bedrooms in the rear addition.
 2. Stairways: One at the northeast corner of the east front room and one in the frame addition against the masonry wall.
 3. Flooring: Pine boards - painted - some original.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster except for brown painted matchboard walls in stairwell and in some second floor and small first floor rooms.
 5. Doorways and doors: 4-panel doors in simple wood frames.
 6. Heating: Fireplaces in the four large downstairs rooms of the masonry portion.
- D. Site and Surroundings:
1. Orientation: Faces Main Street to the south. There is a side street at the east. The Inn occupies the southeast corner of a level tree-shaded state park.
 2. Outbuildings: A barn across the road to the southeast has also been restored.
 3. Landscaping and walks, enclosures: A white picket fence runs along the south and east. There is a large tree at the corner of the building and lilacs at the southwest corner.

Prepared by Paul Goeldner, AIA
Supervisory Architect
Utah Project 1967
July 11, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This record is part of a Utah Survey conducted in the summers of 1967 and 1968 under joint sponsorship of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service and Utah Heritage Foundation.

Field work, historic research and record drawings were done under the direction of Project Supervisor Paul Goeldner, AIA (Texas Tech University) assisted by Project Historian John L. Giusti, AIA (University of Utah). Photographs were made by P. Kent Fairbanks of Salt Lake City.

Student Assistant Architects on the 1967 team were Robert M. Swanson and Charles W. Barrow, (University of Texas) and Kenneth L. Lambert and Keith Sorenson, Charles D. Harker and Robert Schriever, (University of Utah) and Donald G. Prycer, (Texas A. & M. University).